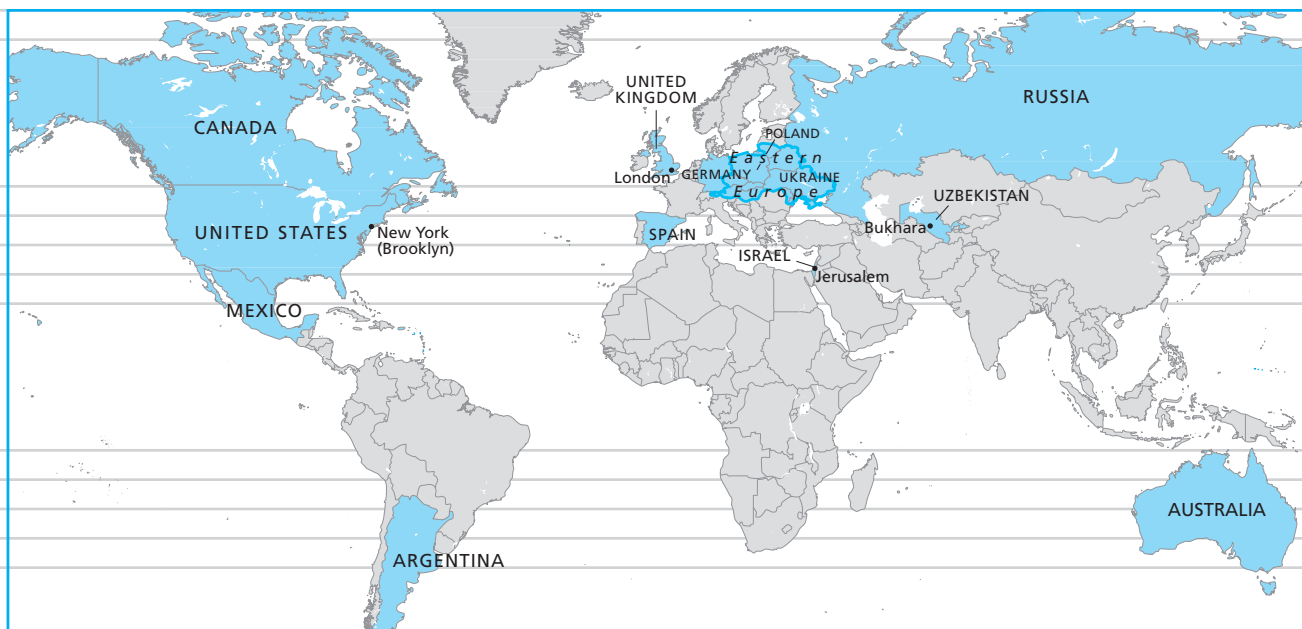


chapter fourteen

climbing **Jacob's Ladder**: modern musical reflections of an ancient **Jewish mystical text**



The holy master, the Baal Shem Tov, while lying on his deathbed, gathered together his disciples, and requested that they sing a song together. As they sang the song, the Baal Shem Tov's soul was slowly drifting from this world. As they neared the end of the tune, the Baal Shem Tov whispered a prayer, and his

soul departed his body, entering eternity through a song. He lived music; his life reads like a harmonious melody; he ascended through music, and finally, became music.

DovBer Pinson, *Inner Rhythms: The Kabbalah of Music*

A passage of ancient, sacred verse chanted by an elderly musician in Uzbekistan. A mystical prayer that is traditionally intoned only by men being sung by a female Israeli vocalist. A contemporary techno recording by a British band featuring heavily processed digital samples of the voice of a cantor from the 1920s.

World events		Music events
Abraham, first patriarch of the Jewish people (in the Torah), migrates to Canaan (modern-day Israel/Palestine)	2nd millennium BCE	
Hyksos Dynasty, Ancient Egypt (third Jewish patriarch, Jacob)	c. 1650–1550 BCE	
Israelite kingdom founded (Jerusalem)	c. 1000 BCE	● King David, legendary musician and poet of the Hebrew Bible, was second king of the Israelite kingdom
Israelite kingdom conquered by the Babylonians; First Temple destroyed; Jews exiled to Babylonian territories	587 BCE	
Jews allowed to return to their homeland (renamed Judea—province of Persian empire)	539 BCE	
Second Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem during Persian rule period		
Judea comes under control of Greek empire	332 BCE	
Judea (Palestine) comes under Roman control	37 BCE	
Second Temple destroyed by Romans	70 CE	
Jews expelled from Judea, sent into exile	132 CE	● Contemporary diversity of Jewish musics reflective of long diasporic history dating back to this era
Jewish diaspora; beginnings of Rabbinic Judaism, synagogues		
Writing of the Zohar, according to Kabbalistic traditionalists	2nd century CE	
Writing of the Zohar (attributed to Moses de León), according to academic historians	13th century CE	● Music an important part of Kabbalistic practice traditionally, including musical

Zohar (ZOE-har)

Kabbalah (Kah-bah-LAH)

deveikut (d'vay-KOOT)

ratso v'shov (ROT-zaw v'SHAWV [Hebrew, but with Yiddish pronunciation])

On the surface, it is difficult to imagine a more eclectic mix of musical productions. Yet the **Zohar**, a central literary work of the Jewish mystical tradition of **Kabbalah** that serves as the common point of reference for all of these performances, is not about surfaces; it is, rather, about the hidden spiritual dimensions *beneath* the surface of perceivable reality.

Music based on or inspired by the Zohar is the focus of this chapter. We will explore several works that are very different from one another, but that all share at least one foundational feature: they are rooted, musically and symbolically, in this central text of Kabbalah. The principal cultural element explored, then, is the Zohar itself. The chapter's musicultural focus is musical symbolism, which is approached in relation to the following guiding question: How are symbolic musical devices—of melodic contour, contrasting textures and dynamics, musical settings of chanted or sung texts—employed, in essence, to invoke the Zohar and bring it to musical life?

A prevalent theme of certain Kabbalistic practices stemming from the Zohar is a transcendent, spiritual ideal of **deveikut**, meaning “to be one with the Divine” (Pinson 2000:33). For Jews who seek this ideal, the path to deveikut is not a straight one, but rather involves a lifelong process of *ratso v'shov*, “going out from and coming back to” this earthly world in aspiring to an ultimate state of direct communion with God.

World events		Music events
New age of Zoharic thought and Kabbalah under Isaac Luria	16th century	
Chassidic Judaism in Central and Eastern Europe (Baal Shem Tov)	18th century	• Music important in Chassidic worship and spirituality; secular, instrumental styles such as klezmer eventually associated with Chassidic culture as well
Reform Judaism (begins in Germany)	19th century	• Reform principles inspired more liberal attitudes toward use of music in connection with Jewish practice and expressions of faith
Mass migrations of Jews from Europe and Russia to U.S. (especially New York City), Canada, Britain, Palestine (under British control), Australia, other countries	1881–1948	• Shifting demographics and cultural developments reflected in the international landscape of Jewish music
Major global shift of world Jewish demographics, culture		
	1928	• Pinchas Pinchik, a Jewish cantor and immigrant to the U.S. from the Ukraine, records “Roso De Shabbos” (on text from the Zohar)
World War II; Holocaust	1939–1945	
Modern nation of Israel declared	1948	
	1997	• British techno group Zöhar formed
	1999	• Ruth Wieder Magan releases CD <i>Songs to the Invisible God</i> , featuring “Roza DeShabbos”
	2001	• Zöhar releases CD <i>onethreeseven</i> , featuring “Ehad”

Music, song, and sung prayer may be performed both to facilitate the pursuit of *deveikut* and to symbolize it. *Melodic direction* is often key to this symbolism. The spiritual aspirant is “seen,” through alternately ascending and descending melodies, going out from and coming back to the world on a “ladder of perfection” leading from the earth to the heavens and back again. And travel occurs in the opposite direction as well, as the God of the Zohar, “in His . . . knowable aspects” (Blumenthal 1978:130), is portrayed as descending *from* the heavens to seek communion with the human world, then returning to the heavenly realms in His own process of *ratso v’shov*, or going out and coming back.

All this traveling between different cosmic realms is highly significant, for in Zoharic thought, “God and man stand in a reciprocal relationship, each benefiting the other, each doing something that allows the other to achieve full existence. . . . The Zohar teaches that God, having committed himself to creation, now needs it” (Blumenthal 1978:154, 156). Exploring how this relationship plays out in music stemming from the Zohar is our interest here.



Jewish Music and Jewish Musics

In approaching this chapter, it is important to note at the outset that some of the music we will examine, though created and performed principally by people who are Jewish, is not necessarily “Jewish music” in the sense of being tied to some universal standard of Jewish religious practices and conventions, Kabbalistic or otherwise. For example, the selection we will focus on in the chapter’s final Guided Listening Experience, Zöhar’s “Ehad” (CD ex. #3-33), could be interpreted as a strictly secular piece of popular music; its status as a composition emerging from the Zoharic tradition of Kabbalah, which is advanced here, is certainly open to question. One of the other pieces, Ruth Weider Magan’s “Roza DeShabbos” (CD ex. #3-32), is a performance that clearly contains Jewish religious content, intent, and affect. Moreover, its connection to the tradition of the Zohar is undeniable. However, its status in some sectors of Jewish society is very controversial for reasons having to do with conflicting ideas about what kinds of spiritual/musical practices are or are not appropriate for Jewish women.

We will explore these two pieces in detail later in the chapter. For now, though, just listen to them and allow yourself to form your own impressions of what they are and what you think they may “represent,” musically and culturally. In particular, consider the following question as you listen: How do these two pieces (either one of them or both together) conform to or contradict any preconceptions you may have had about “Jewish music” prior to hearing them?

Zöhar’s “Ehad” and Ruth Wieder Magan’s “Roza DeShabbos” are, each in its own way, controversial and provocative choices for an introductory textbook chapter on “Jewish music” such as this one, but as with certain other chapters in this book (e.g., Chapter 12), the decision here to focus on music that challenges tidy notions of what constitutes “the tradition” at issue is intentional. There is no single Jewish culture, history, or identity; and though Judaism is a religion, the ways in which this religion is interpreted and practiced are as diverse as Jewish people themselves. Indeed, as historian Raymond Scheindlin and others have commented, “the Jewish people and the Jewish religion are not at all the same thing, certainly not in modern times” (Scheindlin

Jewish men reading from the Torah during a religious service.



1998:xii). The diversity of music covered in this chapter, though all stemming from a single source, the Zohar, reflects these realities, and opens the door to exploring important themes and challenges of tradition and transformation in Jewish experience, past and present.

Further to the matter of Jewish diversity, another important point that warrants mention here is the complex relationship of peoplehood and nationhood in Jewish history. The connection between the Jewish people and a Jewish national homeland is fundamentally different than what we have encountered elsewhere in this book. Whereas all of the other chapters (i.e., of Part II) began their musical explorations from a more-or-less specified geographical location—China, India, western Africa, Cuba, Bali, Egypt, Ireland—before venturing off on musical journeys to various other lands and nations, this chapter works differently.

For almost two thousand years prior to the founding of the modern Jewish nation-state of Israel in 1948, the Jews were predominantly a diasporic people, living away from their ancestral homeland (i.e., the land of present-day Israel). They shared a pre-diasporic history, a unique monotheistic religious belief system, and certain fundamental tenets of law and culture, ethics and morality, and intellectual life. All of these were closely tied to the foundational sacred scripture of the Jewish religion, the **Torah**, the heart of the **Hebrew Bible** (see “Insights and Perspectives” box on p. 330). The Torah, together with a perpetual hope for the arrival of a universal age of redemption under the divine order of God, an age when all Jews would be able to return to their sacred, ancestral homeland of Israel, were key factors that defined the Jews as a people—the Jewish people—for millennia.

But Jews throughout the **Jewish diaspora** were perhaps as importantly defined, as a people, by their relationships with the *other* peoples among whom they lived. For many diasporic Jewish communities in different places and during different times, involuntary separation and exclusion from the “mainstream” of their surrounding societies was as much a part of their Jewishness as being Jewish itself. Moreover, Jews throughout the diaspora were strongly influenced by, and in turn influenced, the societies and cultures surrounding them on many levels, including musical ones. The history of “Jewish music” cannot be directly traced back to the age of the kingdoms of the Israelites thousands of years ago (though there is ample historical evidence to suggest that music played an important role in the Jewish culture of that ancient time). Indeed, most scholars agree that no form of Jewish music that survives today has been in existence for more than a couple of centuries. Jewish music, or, more accurately, Jewish *musics* have developed, evolved, and diversified across the vast range of the Jewish diaspora, and collectively reflect the immense diversity of all with which they have come in contact.

The multiple, eclectic traditions that today fall under the large umbrella of “Jewish music”—from devotional songs of prayer performed by colorfully attired Jewish ensembles from Central Asia (see photo at top of page); to the lively, instrumental dance tunes of *klezmer* bands (Chapter 6, p. 82; **CD ex. #1-46**); to the Radical Jewish Culture movement music of John Zorn and the Chassidic reggae of Matisyahu—speak to this diversity. It is far more than we can cover here, but a list of resources is included at the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/bakan1 for those interested in further exploration.



A Jewish music ensemble from Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

Torah
(Toe-RAH [English pronunciation: TOE-rah])

The Chassidic Jewish reggae musician Matisyahu.



The Hebrew Bible consists of three main parts: the Torah, the books of the Prophets, and the Hagiographa (or Sacred Writings). The seminal core of this immense work is the Torah itself, which is comprised of the Five Books of Moses (*Pentateuch*) (PEN-ta-tookh [from Greek]). The Torah provides what modern historians have described as an allegorical history (though many Jews take it to be more a *literal* history) of the ancient Jews (Israelites) and their God, from the time of God's creation of the universe through to the death of the prophet and Biblical hero Moses. (A prophet is a person who is believed to speak directly with God.) It also furnishes the fundamental basis of all Jewish religious law and custom, which are described as having issued directly from God.

Prophets, the second part of the Hebrew Bible, continues the historical narrative of the Torah through to the destruction of the First Temple of the Israelites in the holy city of Jerusalem (in 587 BCE). This event marked the end of Israelite sovereignty in the Biblical era. Prophets also includes the speeches of the prophets of Israel—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah (Ze-KHAR-ya)—important religious leaders and social commentators (and often champions of social justice) who operated outside the confines of the Israelite Temple hierarchy. Hagiographa, the third part of the Hebrew Bible, includes miscellaneous books such as the Book of Psalms, Lamentations (lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem at the end of the Israelite kingdom era), and Ecclesiastes (a meditation that explores the essential meaning of life).

All of the great sacred texts of Judaism of later periods, including the Talmud (TAL-mud), the Mishnah, the Midrashim (Meed-ra-SHEEM), and, most important for us, the Zohar and other works in the Kabbalistic tradition, represent different instances of, and approaches to, interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. It is also noteworthy that the Hebrew Bible is identified as the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, and is regarded as a sacred text in Islam as well.

Jewish History and the Zohar

Though none of the music of this chapter can be directly traced back to Biblical times or even to later periods of Jewish antiquity, the long and multifaceted history of the Jewish people from Biblical times to the present prefigures and underscores all of this music in significant ways. The selective overview of Jewish history that follows highlights certain important developments that provide an essential cultural-historical background for understanding and appreciating the far-flung Zoharic musical odyssey that follows it.

Early Jewish history

The two principal repositories of information on the ancient history of the Jewish people are (1) archaeological evidence and other non-Biblical sources and (2) the Hebrew Bible. The two corroborate one another in many key respects.

The history of the Jews begins with the first patriarch, Abraham the Hebrew, who the Torah tells us began his life in Ur (in Mesopotamia, probably in present-day Iraq) and, at the command of the God of the Hebrews (Yahweh), migrated to the land of Canaan—modern-day Israel/Palestine—to become the father of the Hebrew people. The Torah indicates that Abraham's migration to Canaan would have taken place sometime during the second millennium BCE, which is consistent with non-Biblical sources that indicate large-scale migrations of seminomadic peoples from regions in Mesopotamia to Canaan around that time.

According to the Torah, the descendants of Abraham, most notably his grandson Jacob, the third patriarch of the Jews, and Jacob's own 12 sons (the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel in the

Habiru and Hebrew

The name “Hebrew” itself is interesting, since archaeological sources from Egypt in the second millennium BCE make reference to a social class of seminomadic peoples (as opposed to a specific ethnic group or clan) called Habiru during that era. This may explain the historical origin of the word Hebrew that we now associate specifically with the Jewish people and their ancient, scriptural language, Biblical **Hebrew** (Scheindlin 1998:4).

Torah) eventually migrated to Egypt. One of Jacob’s sons, Joseph, rose to a position of power in Egyptian politics, and with Joseph’s aid, his father and brothers also prospered. This is again interesting relative to the non-Biblical record. There are archaeological sources that indicate that the Hyksos dynasty in ancient Egypt that began circa 1650 BCE and lasted for approximately a hundred years was ruled by foreigners who had come to Egypt from Canaan. Perhaps Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt corresponded with this development.

Hyksos (HICK-sos)

Descendants of Joseph and his kin fared less well than their predecessors, becoming slaves of the Egyptians. Eventually they were able to leave Egypt, and they returned to Canaan (led by Moses, according to the Biblical version of history) by about 1220 BCE. There they established the Israelite kingdom, circa 1000 BCE. The Israelite kings David (also a legendary musician and poet) and Solomon, heroic figures of the Hebrew Bible, reigned over this kingdom during its golden age. After a long string of conquests by larger, neighboring powers (Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian) and a period of gradual decline and division after Solomon’s reign, the Israelites were finally conquered and their kingdom liquidated by the Babylonians in 587 BCE.

The Israelites were subsequently exiled to Babylonian territories, where they “created religious institutions that would enable them to keep the memory of their kingdom and the dream of its restoration alive for centuries” (Scheindlin 1998:22–23). This dream, these religious institutions, the Hebrew Bible, and the monotheistic religion of Judaism itself would become unifying foundations of diasporic Judaism in this and later ages.

Under the Persians (who conquered the Babylonians shortly after the Babylonians conquered the Israelites), Jews were allowed to return to their homeland, now redesignated as the Persian province of Judea, beginning in 539 BCE. Many did not return, however, continuing to live in diaspora in Babylonia, Egypt, and other places. According to Scheindlin, it is from this period onward that “it becomes appropriate to begin speaking of the Jewish people, meaning all those who, throughout history and around the globe, have regarded themselves as linked to one another and to the people of the ancient Israelite kingdom, either by ethnicity, culture, intellectual heritage, or religion” (Scheindlin 1998:28).

Judea became a quasi-autonomous province where Jews were free to practice their religion and culture under the Persians. Then, in the 4th century BCE, Judea (and ultimately the entire Persian empire, including virtually all other lands to which diasporic Jews had relocated up to that time) came under Greek rule (332 BCE). Henceforth, “the interplay between Jewish and Hellenic [Greek] ideals was to become one of the characteristic themes of all Western civilization” (Scheindlin 1998:33). Next (in 37 BCE) came the era of Roman control of Judea (which came also to be known as Palestine). Over time, Jewish-Roman relations deteriorated, leading to the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE and the expulsion of the entire Jewish population of Judea following an unsuccessful revolt against Roman rule (132 CE).

With this exiling of the Jews began almost two thousand years of continuous diasporic existence for the vast majority of Jewish people. Though Jews were eventually allowed to return to the



A woman prays at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Israel; this holy wall is all that remains of the Second Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

Shimon Bar Yochai
(SHEE-moan Bar
Yo-KHAI [rhymes
with “high”])

**Chassidism (KHA-
sid-is-um [NB:
Anglicized word
based on Hebrew])**

land that the Torah claimed had been promised to them by God, that land was ruled by a succession of foreign powers from Roman times until the declaration of the modern state of Israel in 1948. Throughout that long period and even since 1948, the majority of the world’s Jewish population has lived outside of the country now called Israel.

Rabbinic Judaism, the Zohar, Kabbalah, and Reform Judaism

From Roman times forward to the present, Jewish religious practice mainly took the form of **Rabbinic Judaism**, which centered on study of the Torah. The **synagogue** (from a Greek word meaning “assembly”) was established as the communal center of Jewish religious life and ritual observance. **Rabbis**, specialists in Jewish religious traditions and law, served as the leaders of synagogue congregations. They also created the canonical texts of Biblical interpretation, such as the Mishnah and the Talmud. These explained and reframed the eternal teachings and laws of the Torah, placing them in the context of the new times, places, and conditions of Jewish life.

The stream of Judaism that would ultimately come to be known as Kabbalah also experienced important developments during the Roman period. Kabbalists claim that the Zohar was actually written during the 2nd century CE as a chronicle of divine revelations and teachings attributed to a legendary mystic of that period named Shimon Bar Yochai. This massive work is not so much a book as a sprawling compendium of mystical commentaries on the Hebrew Bible and other sacred texts. The original language in which the Zohar was written is **Aramaic**, which was the main language spoken by Jews of this period.

Most modern scholarly sources on the Zohar refute the Kabbalists’ claim of its origin in this early period, suggesting rather that it was written during the late 13th century, more than a thousand years later than was formerly believed. Principal authorship of the Zohar, according to this theory, is attributed to a 13th-century Spanish Kabbalist named Moses de León. Scholars suggest that he wrote the Zohar in Aramaic and concealed his identity as its author so that people would think it was an ancient work that he had discovered (Scheindlin 1998:116).

The next great age of Zoharic thought came in the 16th century, when a group of Kabbalists led by Isaac Luria created a new approach to interpreting the Zohar that explained the historical suffering of the Jews in relation to cataclysmic cosmic events that would ultimately find resolution in a future age of universal redemption under the rule of God (Scheindlin 1998:132). All of the musical works in this chapter are linked closely to this Lurianic conception of the Zohar, as we shall see.

The Lurianic approach to the Zohar had a profound influence on the final major stage of historical development in Kabbalistic Judaism, **Chassidism**, which arose in Central and Eastern Europe during the 18th century. Chassidism was a populist movement that privileged a joyful, ecstatic brand of Jewish religious experience over the learned, scholarly, and rationalist approaches of Rabbinic Judaism that had mainly prevailed in Europe up to that time. The Chassidic movement took its inspiration from the Baal Shem Tov, a sage who stressed that joy, not asceticism, was the key to pursuing a righteous path to God. The complex, scholarly, esoteric texts of the Kabbalah, including the Zohar itself and works inspired by it that came out of the Lurianic school and others, were transformed into simple teachings designed to be accessible and engaging for

Kabbalah and Mysticism

At the risk of oversimplification, it may be said that mystic forms of spirituality, such as Kabbalah in Judaism and Sufism in Islam (see Chapter 12), focus more on direct, personal experience of the divine than on understandings rooted in reason and intellect. Where Rabbinic Judaism, as represented especially in works like the Talmud, approaches the interpretation of the Torah mainly from rational, philosophical perspectives on Jewish law and custom, Kabbalistic Judaism is more often characterized by a contrasting emphasis on a mystical, experiential pursuit of hidden truths that Kabbalists believe are there to be revealed beneath the “surface” of the Torah itself (a subject to which we will return).

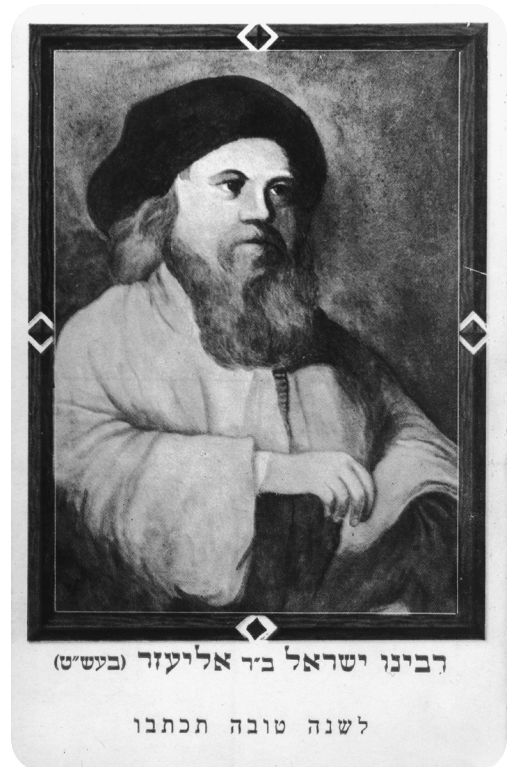
the commoner classes of Jews to whom Chassidism was largely directed. (These teachings were disseminated mainly in the vernacular Central/Eastern European language of **Yiddish**, which combined German with elements of Hebrew, Russian, Polish, and other languages.) Music, dance, and all manner of joyful celebration were central to Chassidic practice and philosophy. This, together with its populist orientation and simplified messages of Zoharic/Lurianic-inspired hope for a glorious Jewish future, proved highly appealing to many European Jews, especially in the wake of growing anti-Semitism—hatred and persecution of Jews—in Europe during this period.

Another important development of Judaism in Europe was the emergence of **Reform Judaism**, which began in Germany in the 19th century. Reform Judaism, like Chassidism, challenged the established conventions of European Rabbinic Judaism, but did so in very different ways. The Reform movement maintained that the conventional rituals and laws of Judaism needed to be adjusted and transformed to keep pace with changing times and social conditions; in other words, they needed to be modernized. New forms of worship and customs were introduced.

The progressive, modernist spirit of Reform Judaism persists to the present and is embedded, explicitly or implicitly, in music we will explore in this chapter. Interestingly, many important contemporary ideas and practices linked to Reform Judaism, including musical ones, draw heavily from Chassidic traditions and new approaches to the tradition of Kabbalah.

Modern Jewish history

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a major shift in the demographics of Jewish diaspora culture. In the face of escalating anti-Semitism, growing poverty, political strife, and diminished opportunities, large numbers of Jews migrated from Central and Eastern Europe and Russia to the United States, Canada, and other lands (the United Kingdom, Argentina, Mexico, Australia, and also Palestine, which was under British control from 1917–1948). Mass migration from Eastern Europe to the United States from 1881 through to the outbreak of World War II in 1939 brought millions of Jewish immigrants. New York City emerged as the new center of Jewish culture on an international scale. One outcome of this was that the world headquarters of Chassidism was moved from Eastern Europe to Brooklyn, New York, and with it the Chassidic legacy of the Kabbalah and the Zohar.



Painting of the Baal Shem Tov.



The history of the Jewish people in the middle of the 20th century was dominated by the unspeakable atrocities of the **Holocaust** during World War II (in which six million Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis) and by the establishment of the modern nation of Israel in 1948. Today, Israel is both a rich and vibrant country and one plagued by immense challenges. The ongoing struggles between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the incessant climate of terrorist danger, and the extraordinary problems that define Palestinian-Israeli relations contribute to Israel's status as a volatile and troubled nation. On the other hand, Israel is a land of great cultural, intellectual, and spiritual richness and diversity and a beacon of hope and opportunity for many Jews worldwide. It is also a major hub of a thriving pan-Jewish, international musical culture with comparable centers in New York, London, and other locations. Israel is today home to many great musicians, one of whom, Ruth Wieder Magan, is a focus of this chapter.

Climbing Jacob's Ladder: Musical Symbolism and the Melodious Voice in Kabbalistic Prayer

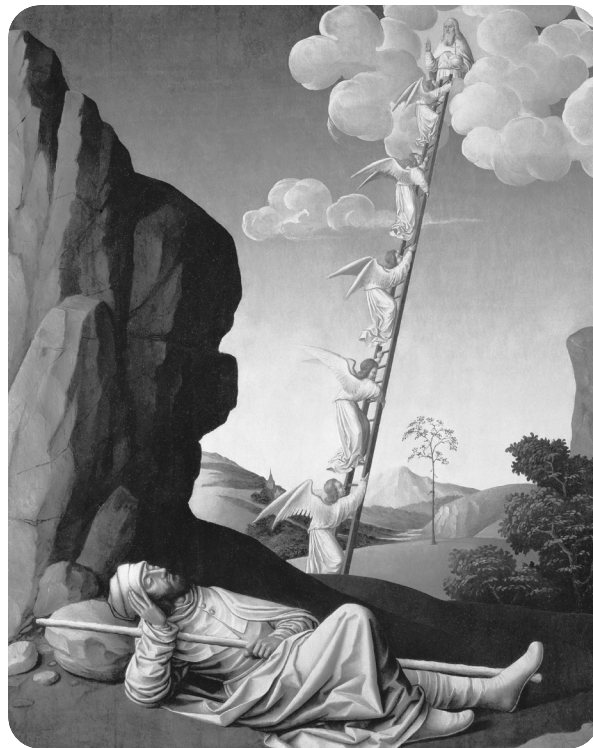
In Genesis (or in Hebrew, *Bereshith*), the first book of the Torah, is contained the story of Jacob's Ladder, one of the best-known portions of the Hebrew Bible. In the story, Jacob, patriarch and prophet of the Jewish people, has a dream of divine revelation. He sees a ladder that reaches from the earth to the heavens, and God's messengers (angels) are climbing up and down upon it. Then he hears the voice of God. It is a pivotal moment in the narrative of the Torah and in the Torah's historical chronicling of the Jewish people.

Jacob's Ladder (the ladder of holiness, the ladder of perfection) has important metaphorical significance in the prayer tradition of Kabbalah. "Prayer is likened, say the kabbalists, to the ladder in the dream of Jacob, which stands on the ground, and reaches into the sky," explains DovBer Pinson, a Chassidic Jew and the author of the book *Inner Rhythms: The Kabbalah of Music* (2000). "Thus," Pinson continues, "the course of prayer is to connect ourselves to God one step at a time,

climbing the ladder of perfection. At the outset of prayer one starts off on the lowest rung, and eventually one climbs until he is joined and becomes ‘one with One,’” that is, united in heart and soul with God, or *deveikut* (Pinson 2000:79).

This metaphor of climbing Jacob’s Ladder is importantly symbolized through the melodious use of the voice in prayer. The different notes of the musical scale to which a prayer melody is set become, metaphorically, rungs on the ladder of holiness. As Pinson writes, “Kabbalah teaches that the various notes in the octave represent the various levels in a person’s love for God. The higher the note, the loftier and deeper is the love being expressed” (Pinson 2000:34). Moreover, the melodies of prayer, potentially even more than the words of prayer themselves, may provide pathways to the deepest and most profound levels of spiritual expression, communication, and transcendence. “[W]hen the thought that one wishes to share is something beyond the rational, a profound expression of love, for example, the most direct communication is through song. Understanding this in the human realm brings us to an understanding of the Divine realm. When the Torah is read, the expression of Divinity coming through the *melody* of the reading is in fact higher than that of the actual *letters* of the holy Torah” (Pinson 2000:4).

Passages from other sacred Jewish texts besides the Torah, including the Zohar, also are set to melodies, and in these contexts, too, the use of melody figures importantly in the expression of spirituality. In the following Guided Listening Experience, we explore a chanted (melodically recited) setting of a passage from the Zohar in which melodic shape and direction serve to create a Jacob’s Ladder-like musical portrait in prayer.



Painting of the Biblical scene of Jacob’s Ladder.

guided listening experience

“V’amazirim” (Zoharic chant), Isaac Kataev



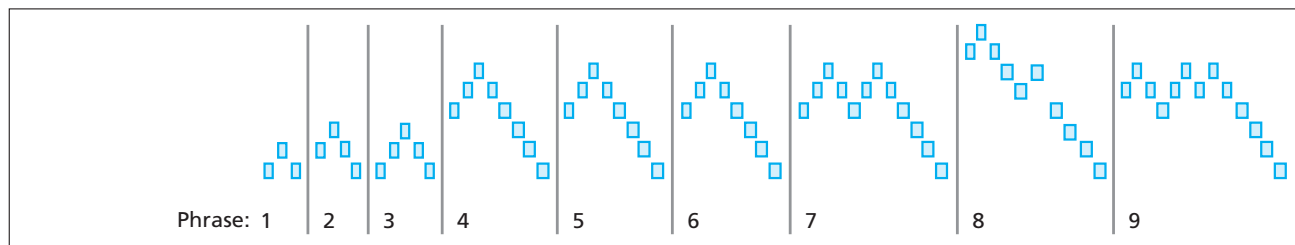
- CD Track #3-31
- Featured performer(s)/group: Isaac Kataev (voice)
- Format: Complete track
- Source recording: “Zohar” (title of selection on the original recording), from *Bukhara: Musical Crossroads of Asia* (Smithsonian Folkways CD SF 40050)

The Central Asian city of Bukhara (in Uzbekistan) is home to Jewish communities and traditions dating back centuries. These communities thrived under benevolent Islamic rulers, especially during the 14th and 15th centuries, when great epic works were written in a distinctive Judeo-Persian language. The Jews of Bukhara mainly spoke the language of their surrounding culture, Tajik, a dialect of Persian (Persia was the former name of modern-day Iran).

In modern times, the Jewish culture of Bukhara has been greatly diminished, but its traditions, including Kabbalistic ones linked to the Zohar specifically, have passed down through the generations to individuals like the late Isaac Kataev, who have preserved them. **CD ex. #3-31**

Kataev (Ka-TAH-yev)

FIGURE 14.1



features Kataev performing a passage from the Zohar, *V'amazirim Yazhaeru Kezohar Harakiah* (These People Will Be Radiant Like the Light of Heaven). Though it cannot be known for sure, the style of prayerful, melodious recitation of the Zohar represented here may provide a glimpse of how the Zohar was “performed” by Jews in Bukhara centuries ago (and also reflects melodic and rhythmic influences of non-Jewish, Central Asian court music traditions—see Levin 2005).



Isaac Kataev.

On a purely musical level, one of the most interesting features of Kataev’s rendition of “V'amazirim” is its *melodic contour*, both that of its individual melodic phrases *and* of the performance overall (Figure 14.1). In true Jacob’s Ladder fashion, each phrase of the melody climbs up the scale of pitches and then climbs back down again, always ending on the starting pitch (i.e., the tonic) of B. In addition, the melodic range *overall* climbs progressively higher over the course of the performance. Phrase 1 (0:00–0:09), for example, begins and ends on the tonic, B, traveling upward and downward a few melodic steps in-between. Phrase 2 (0:10–0:19) then begins on the *second* scale degree, C \sharp , and from there ascends a step higher in pitch than Phrase 1 did before climbing back down to end on the tonic, B. A progressive, phrase-by-phrase, overall melodic ascent unfolds from that point forward. The climax occurs in Phrase 8 (1:52–2:09), which starts on a *high* B (an octave above the starting note of the piece), then pushes upward higher still to a D before gradually winding its way back down the ladder to the low B again. The concluding passage, Phrase 9 (2:10–2:39), rounds out the performance.

On both micro and macro levels of melodic design, then, Kataev’s performance illustrates the principle of Jacob’s Ladder-like ascents and descents. On the micro level, this occurs in the melodic rises and falls of each individual phrase; on the macro level, it is evident in the progressive, gradual rise in pitch and expansion of pitch range that occurs over the course of the piece, phrase after phrase. As the voice of prayer travels, we witness its journey as a continual series of “going out and coming back” excursions, with each excursion reaching higher rungs on the ladder of holiness than the ones preceding (Figure 14.1).

guided listening quick summary

“V'amazirim,” Isaac Kataev (CD ex. #3-31)

PHRASE 1

0:00–0:09

- Starts on tonic note, B, ascends (to D), then returns to B.

PHRASE 2

0:10–0:19

- Starts on second degree of scale, C[♯] (after a lead-in “pick-up” note of B), rises a step higher than Phrase 1 did, then returns to and ends on B.

PHRASE 3

0:20–0:34

- No significant change from Phrase 2.

PHRASE 4

0:35–0:56

- Melody jumps to higher range territory; F[♯] and G[♯] (the fifth and sixth scale degrees, or “steps” of the ladder) become the main pitches.

PHRASES 5–7

0:57–1:51

- No significant change from Phrase 4.

PHRASE 8

1:52–2:09

- Climax of performance arrives at 1:52, where the melody begins on a *high* B (one octave above the starting note), ascends higher yet (to a high D), then gradually descends more than an octave to end on the piece’s opening pitch, the low B.

PHRASE 9

2:10–2:39

- Conclusion of performance.

Melodic symbolism in “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder”

The Jacob’s Ladder-like use of melodic symbolism in performances such as Isaac Kataev’s “V’amazirim” is not uniquely Jewish. Indeed, similar symbolic devices are used in many other traditions of music as well, including some Christian spiritual songs. Appropriately enough, the Christian spiritual “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” offers a clear and accessible illustration of this type of musical symbolism.

The Musical Guided Tour for this chapter breaks down the opening verse of “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” phrase by phrase, showing how the contour of the melody rises progressively before ultimately descending back to the opening tonic pitch (B). The overall profile of the melodic contour is similar to that of “V’amazirim” in **CD ex. #3-31** (see Figure 14.2 on p. 338) (though this is not to imply that there is any direct relationship between the two works; there is none). The transcript in the box on page 338 corresponds to the audio Musical Guided Tour. As you listen to this tour at the Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/bakan1), follow along with this transcript.

The upward and downward melodic motion that accompanies the climbing imagery of the “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” text illustrates a musical symbolism technique that is found in many world music traditions. A common English-language term for this technique is **word painting**. In word painting, the words of the text are evoked in the sound and design of the music itself (i.e., the words are “painted” in musical tones), in this case with the climbing up and down

This is the first verse of “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder.” The song is sung here in the key of B major.

Here is Phrase 1. Note how the melody begins on the tonic note, B, rises up to an F \sharp , then descends back to B [♪].

Now here’s Phrase 2, which begins on the *second* degree of the scale, C \sharp , then rises up to a G \sharp before ending up one scale step below on an F \sharp [♪].

The verse ends with Phrase 3, which starts a full octave above the starting note on a *high* B, then winds its way back down the scale a full octave to the low B starting pitch to conclude [♪].

Now, here is a performance of the complete first verse, start to finish [♪]:

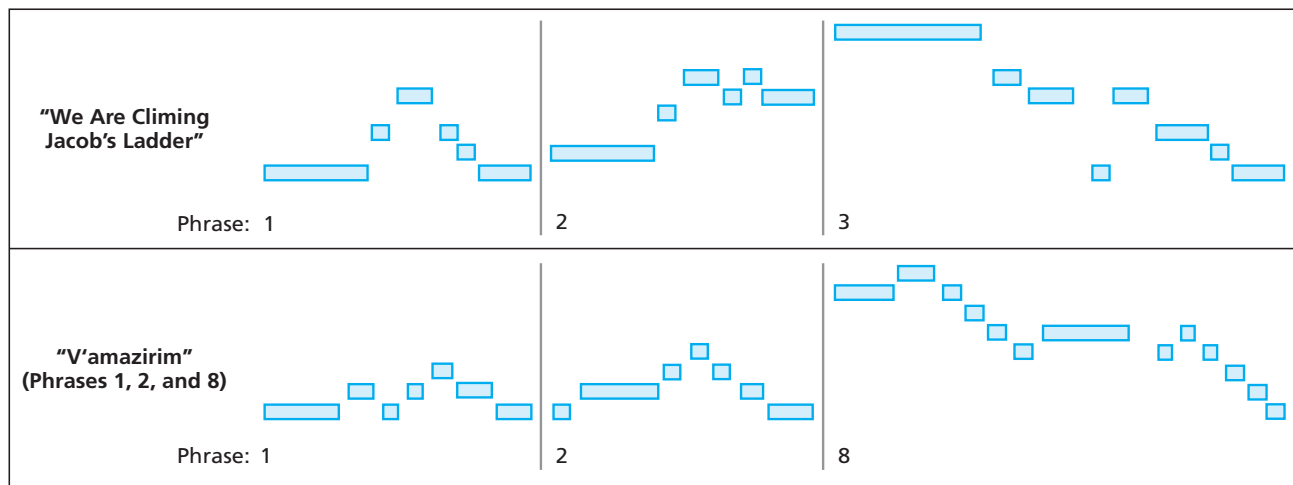
(Phrase 1): *We are climbing Jacob’s ladder.*

(Phrase 2): *We are climbing Jacob’s ladder.*

(Phrase 3): *We are climbing Jacob’s ladder. We’re soldiers of the cross.*

Similarities in melodic contour of “V’amazirim” and “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder.”

FIGURE 14.2



of the “soldiers of the cross” made manifest in the ascending and descending lines of the melody. We will encounter more complex instances of word painting in music explored later in the chapter.

Music, the Zohar, and the Secrets of the Torah

According to the traditions of Kabbalah, the Torah consists of two dimensions: a “body,” which is the Torah proper, and an invisible “inner dimension” or “soul,” which is the domain of Kabbalah. For those who follow its teachings, Kabbalah thus represents the hidden dimension

of the Torah. Kabbalistic texts like the Zohar, say the Kabbalists, contain the “secrets, mysteries, mysteries of mysteries, and many dimensions of soul within soul” that reside beneath the surface level of the Torah’s actual written text (Ginsburgh 2002). These are not readily revealed, for the Zohar is an exceedingly complex literary work. Unlike the Torah itself, whose secrets it aims to reveal, the Zohar does not proceed in anything like a linear fashion. Instead, it jumps about in a seemingly haphazard manner among different themes, ideas, scriptural references, and moralizing anecdotes, which often appear to have little, if anything, to do with each other. Beyond careful reading and analysis of the Zohar, Kabbalists employ a variety of related techniques—meditation, mystical numerology (i.e., **gematria**, in which hidden meanings are believed to emerge when numerical values are assigned to Hebrew letters in complex, arithmetic procedures), and fasting and other forms of bodily deprivation—to open themselves to the complexly construed divine revelations of the Zohar and, in turn, of the Torah.

gematria
(ge-MA-tree-yah)

Music is recognized as a particularly important medium used by Kabbalists in their pursuit of divine revelations. “Knowledge of the secret of music leads one to knowledge of the secret of the Torah,” as one 13th-century Kabbalist wrote (see Shiloah 1992:132). It therefore follows that musical performances of passages from the Zohar, delivered mainly in the context of prayer, occupy a prominent place in Kabbalistic methods.

We have already been introduced to one passage of the Zohar for which there exists a tradition of setting the text to music in prayer (*V’amazirim*). Another Zoharic passage that has served as the basis of many different musical settings is **Roza D’Shabbos** (The Secret of the Sabbath).

Roza D’Shabbos
(RAW-za d’SHAH-bus [Hebrew, but with Yiddish pronunciation])

Roza D’Shabbos: The Secret of the Sabbath

The passage of the Zohar known as Roza D’Shabbos is one that forecasts a coming age of universal redemption under the divine rule of God, and that provides a prescription, as it were, for bringing about this glorious future age. In order to help you understand the text of Roza D’Shabbos and appreciate the musical works originating from it that we will examine, the following primer on Zoharic basics is offered.

Background information on the Zohar and Roza D’Shabbos

A major, perhaps *the* major, concern of the Zohar is unraveling the mysteries of the creation of the universe described in the Torah. One of the great challenges of this unraveling is to account for the seeming paradox of God’s infinite, unfathomable nothingness, on the one hand, and His more manifest presence as the God of the Creation and the finite world, on the other (Koskoff 2001:34).

The Zohar explains that **Hashem**, the one true God in Judaism, is everywhere and in everything that is, has been, and ever will be, and yet he is also “nothing.” At the most exalted level, He is **Ain Sof**, “the God of Nothingness,” “the Invisible God,” “God Without End.” Ain Sof is completely unknowable, unimaginable. Only by descending through a series of 10 lower spheres of His own divine being—the **Ten Sefirot**, or rays of divine radiance—does this unknowable God become knowable as God of the Creation, the Torah, and the earthly and heavenly realms (see Figure 14.3, p. 340).

Hashem (Hah-SHEM)
Ain Sof (Ayn-SOAF)
Sefirot (S’fee-ROTE)

In the Zohar, the lowest of the Sefirot, the one closest to earth, is called **Malchut**, meaning “Kingdom.” Herein dwells the **Shechinah**, who is characterized as a female, receiving aspect of God’s omnidimensional Oneness. She is the divine embodiment of neutrality, an empty vessel capable of absorbing all of Hashem’s higher aspects and attributes and thus of implanting the “divine spark” of His essence in all of God’s creations. The Creation is portrayed in the Zohar as resulting from an act of divine intercourse between Hashem (in his male aspect) and the Shechinah. Through this union, we learn, the Shechinah became “one with One,” one with Hashem, in the moment of the Creation, which accounts for her status as the queen, daughter, and bride of God, the mother of all Jews (Scholem 1995[1941]:230).

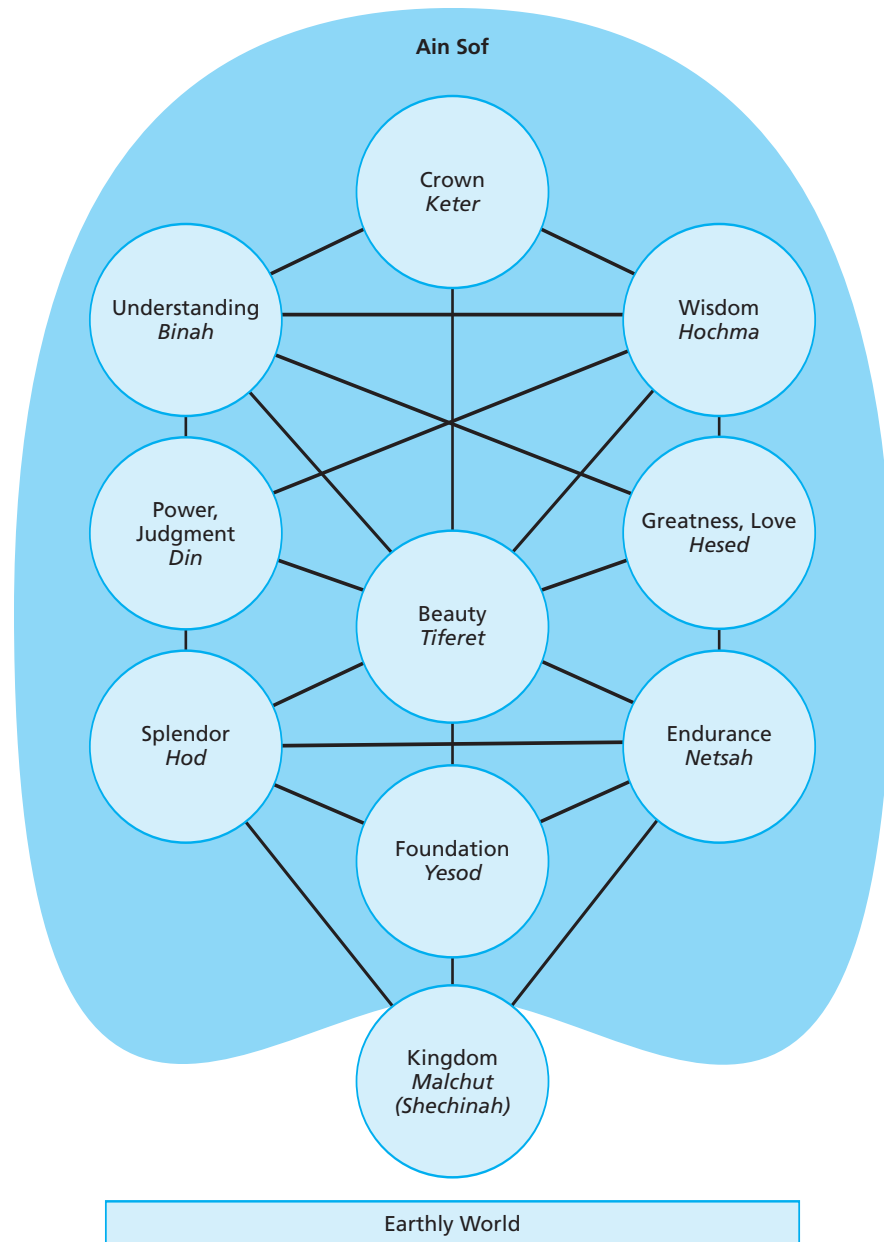
Malchut
(Mall-KHOOT)
Shechinah
(Sh’khee-NAH)

But the Shechinah is a queen and mother in exile. Long ago, says the Zohar, the combined effects of human failings (beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) and impurities in

The Ten Sefirot.

Source: Adapted from Koskoff 2001:35. Used by permission of Ellen Koskoff.

FIGURE 14.3



the divine rays of the higher Sefirot combined to obscure God's radiant light, which disrupted the divine order of the universe. As a result, Malchut and the earthly world below it were severed from the higher Sefirot above, and the Shechinah was separated from the higher aspects of Hashem. With that calamitous moment of cosmic fracture, claims the Zohar, came the tragic consequences of divine fragmentation that continue to affect us today.

But there is hope for a better future, we learn from the Zohar. The potential for a reunification of Malchut and the earthly world with the higher Sefirot exists, and Hashem and the Shechinah can be reunited. If this occurs, an age of universal healing and redemption will occur. The responsibility for all this, however, lies not with God, but with humankind. Only when all people

everywhere (or, at least, all Jewish people), through their prayers, good deeds, and total devotion to God, have purified the world to the point that God's rays of divine light are reflected back up to Him in full radiance will Hashem and the Shechinah once again be united. Only then will the cosmic balance of the universe be restored, paving the way for the coming age of redemption, when Hashem will reveal Himself in the world and rule from this heaven-on-earth as King of Kings.

Divine reunification and universal redemption in Roza D'Shabbos

The Zoharic passage Roza D'Shabbos depicts, in highly metaphorical terms, the reunification of Hashem and the Shechinah that initiates the long-yearned-for coming age of universal redemption. It unfolds as a narrative of ascending and descending flights between divine and earthly realms that are traveled by entities both divine and human. Hashem is "seen" descending to unite with the Shechinah. The Shechinah ascends in holiness as she is restored to grace by again becoming "one with God." And prompting all of this divine motion to occur in the first place, the Jewish people themselves are portrayed metaphorically as climbing the rungs of the ladder of holiness toward communion with God through their prayers.

Here is an English translation of the Roza D'Shabbos text, followed by an interpretation that explains the meanings of the text's metaphorical language. In the translation (from Aramaic), the Shechinah is referred to as She or Her. Hashem is referred to in several different ways: as The Holy One, the Holy King, the Holy Transcendent King, and sometimes simply as One, or Him. One of the important names for God used by Jews in prayer, the Hebrew *Adonai*, appears only once, in the last line of the first stanza: "God is One and His Name is One."—"Adonai Echad oo-Sh'mo Echad." This line of text, taken from the Torah, is paramount to Jewish law and belief.

**Echad, Ehad
(e-KHAD)**

*The Holy One, Blessed Be He, who is One
does not sit on His Throne of Glory above
until She enters into the mystery of One with Him
as being one within One
As it is written, the secret of
"God is One and His Name is One."*

*In the secret of Shabbat, She, on Shabbat
enters into the mystery of One, the mystery of
One resting in Her
through the evening prayer rising into Shabbat.
Then it is that the Throne of Glory
merges into the mystery of One
and is made ready for the Holy
Transcendent King to sit upon.*

Shabbat (Sha-BAHT)

*As Shabbat enters She merges into One
and is separated from evil.
All judgments against Her are canceled
and She abides in union with the holy light
and is crowned with many crowns
before the Holy King.*

*Then all the powers of wrath and the accusers vanish
and in all the worlds no other power reigns.*

(Adapted from a translation by Ruth Wieder Magan [personal correspondence with the author, 2002]; used by permission of Ruth Wieder Magan.)

To summarize, then, we learn in Roza D'Shabbos that God's universe exists in a perpetual state of disharmony ("The Holy One . . . does not sit on His Throne of Glory above") and will remain that way until such time as Hashem and the Shechinah can once again be united as they were at the time of the Creation ("until She enters into the mystery of One with Him, as being one within One"). The holy union that will lead to this unification ("the mystery of One resting in Her") will be initiated neither by Hashem nor the Shechinah, however, but rather by the Jewish people, whose long-awaited, uniform, and total submission to God will be signaled by their Sabbath (Shabbat) prayers rising up in purity for God to hear ("through the evening prayer rising into Shabbat"). Only then will Hashem come down into the world to rule as the King of Kings, and will all evil disappear and all of God's creations again become "one within One" in God.

**Pinchas Pinchik (PIN-
khass PIN-chick)**

Pinchas Pinchik's "Roso De Shabbos" (Roza D'Shabbos): A tone-poem about holiness

In the past, and still today, the Roza D'Shabbos passage of the Zohar was recited as a prayer by Chassidic Jews as a prelude to their Friday evening Shabbat (Shabbos) religious services. (Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath, the day of rest and holiest day of the week; it begins every Friday evening at sundown and ends an hour after sunset on Saturday.) In this context, Roza D'Shabbos is performed as a kind of "Kabbalistic meditation" murmured under the breath in barely audible tones.

In the early 1900s, a renowned **cantor** (the solo singer and leader of congregational chanting in Jewish religious services), Pinchas (Pierre) Pinchik, became deeply interested in Chassidic music from his native Ukraine and other areas of Eastern Europe. Though not a Chassid himself, he drew upon this music as source and inspiration for his own compositions and singing style. For the first half of the text of Roza D'Shabbos (ending with the line meaning "and is made ready for the Holy Transcendent King to sit upon"), Pinchik created a powerful and beautiful melody, transforming this former "silent prayer" into what the American cantor Sam Weiss has aptly described as "a tone-poem about holiness" (Weiss 1994:15).

A historic recording of this composition, featuring Pinchik singing and accompanying himself on the organ, was produced in 1928, three years after Pinchik emigrated from the Ukraine to the United States during the mass migrations of that period. That recording has since been re-released on an excellent CD entitled *Mysteries of the Sabbath: Classic Cantorial Recordings: 1907–47* (Yazoo Records 7002). In his notes accompanying the recording, Weiss writes evocatively of Pinchik's "soaring flights heavenward" that are "tempered by chastened returns earthward," of moments where the melody seems to "outline the rungs on the ladder of holiness" as it climbs upward and back down again (Weiss 1994:15).

guided listening experience



"Roso DeShabbos," Ruth Wieder Magan (after Pinchas Pinchik)

- CD Track #3-32
- Featured performer(s)/group: Ruth Wieder Magan (voice)
- Format: Complete track
- Source recording: *Songs to the Invisible God*, by Ruth Wieder Magan (Sounds True STA M111D)

Much of the spirit of Pinchas Pinchik's original recording of "Roso De Shabbos" lives on in a relatively recent recording of the same piece (here titled "Roza DeShabbos") by the outstanding Israeli vocalist Ruth Wieder Magan. Wieder Magan's "Roza," to which we listened earlier, appears as the opening track on her 1999 CD *Songs to the Invisible God*. The Hebrew title of *Songs to the Invisible God* is *Ayin Zoher*. *Ayin* (*Ain*) means "nothingness," a reference to the nothingness of *Ain Sof*, the "Invisible God" of the English title. *Zoher* means "brightly glowing," referring to the Zohar itself (a common English translation of the full title of the Zohar, *Sefer ha-Zohar*, is "The Book of Radiance").

Ruth Wieder Magan lives in Israel but was born and raised in Australia by parents who were survivors of the Holocaust. She is a classically trained singer and voice teacher, a co-founding member of an innovative Israeli theater company (Theatre Company Jerusalem), a wife and mother, and a self-described feminist. Most importantly for our purposes, perhaps, Wieder Magan is a serious student of the Zohar and the tradition and practice of Kabbalah more broadly, despite the fact that the study of Kabbalah has historically been "a masculine doctrine, made for men and by men" (Scholem 1995[1941]:37).

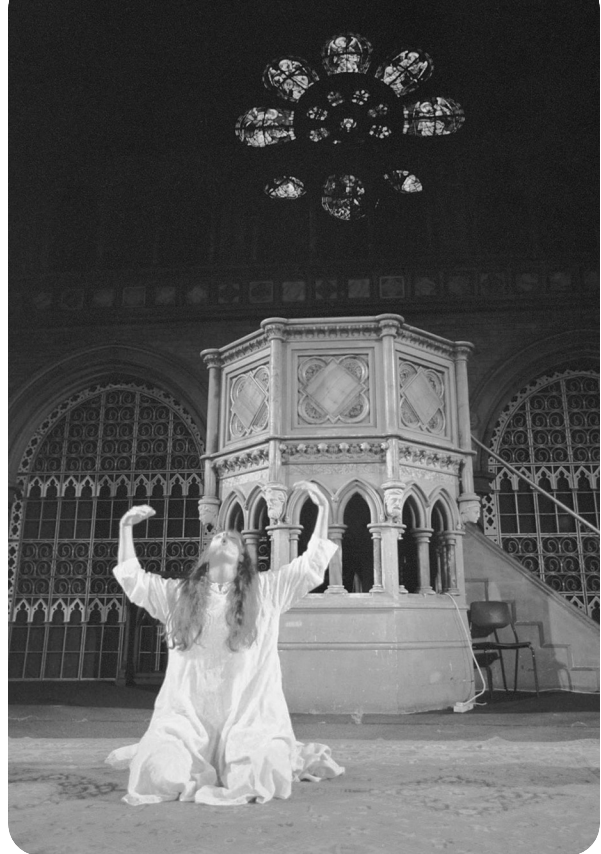
For Wieder Magan, the release of *Songs to the Invisible God* followed nearly a quarter-century of intensive study of the Zohar, other sacred texts, and the Jewish prayer tradition. She counts many learned and respected rabbis among her teachers. The recording itself is a testament to her seriousness of purpose; her committed spirituality seems to shine through on every note. In the accompanying CD booklet of *Songs*, the music is described as an "original blend of ancient prayers and folksongs with poetry and theatre—delicately and intensely woven into burning, bruising, beautiful sounds."

Wieder Magan sings "Roza DeShabbos" in the original Aramaic language of the Zohar (i.e., with quoted passages from the Torah in Hebrew). Other than the use of female voice and the absence of the organ, her version adheres quite closely to Pinchik's original. But although she consciously models her own performance after Pinchik's, Wieder Magan is by no means afraid to move away from his model to follow her own interpretive and spiritual vision.

Wieder Magan's "Roza" features several passages in which the melody seems to climb heavenward and descend earthward. Other elements—changes in dynamics, rhythm, voice timbre, and emotional intensity—serve to enhance these musical episodes of "going out and coming back" from different points of earthly and heavenly departure. The piece and performance as a whole paint a vivid picture of the Zoharic text they evoke, while adding deeper dimensions to its meaning and interpretation. The approaches to musical symbolism evident in this compelling performance are especially clear in certain passages, which are identified and described below and summarized in the Guided Listening Quick Summary on pages 344–45.

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One interesting instance of musical symbolism occurs beginning at 0:40, on the line (in translation) "as being one within One," a reference to the Shechinah becoming encompassed in the supreme Oneness of God through their divine union. The first part of the line, "as being one," is uttered at a moderate dynamic level in speechlike fashion, but at "within One," the melody swoops upward, the voice diminishing in volume as it ascends (0:43–0:45). By the top of her ascent, Wieder Magan's voice is almost inaudible as she holds a pristine, unornamented note of very high pitch for three full seconds (0:45–0:48). Then, quite suddenly, the dynamic level returns to moderate and the melody tumbles downward to conclude the phrase (0:48–0:53). Heavenward flight and earthward return are vividly portrayed not just in the melody but also in



Ruth Wieder Magan.

the dynamics: as the voice climbs upward it almost disappears, approaching inaudibility as it travels away from the world and toward the invisible “nothingness” of *Ain Sof*. Then it comes back to normal volume for the climb back down to the lower realms.

Another heavenward musical flight occurs in the passage from 1:00–1:25. In contrast to the previous one, however, it unfolds with great intensity. From 1:03–1:14, the volume *increases* dramatically with the melody rising a full octave on the word “Echad”—meaning “One,” that is, the One true God—then continues to increase as Wieder Magan holds the top note for a very long time (seven seconds). The volume and intensity then diminish for the last part of the phrase (1:15–1:25), where the Hebrew words for “and His Name is One” (“oo-Sh’mo Echad”) are intoned. The climactic moment on the highest-pitched note seems to symbolize the “arrival” of God on the scene at this point. The great intensity here is also a testament to the paramount commandment of “Adonai Echad”—“God is One”—that is emphatically proclaimed.

A third interesting passage is the one heard at 2:21–2:31. Here, the symbolism of melodic descent seems to evoke the descent of Hashem into the Shechinah’s sphere and their subsequent divine union. On the line meaning “the mystery of One resting in Her” (2:21–2:31), which metaphorically represents Hashem and the Shechinah uniting in love, there is a decrease in intensity as the melody descends to a very low-pitched note at the end of the phrase. The mood created here by the music is very gentle, a lover’s caress, as it were.

Finally, and perhaps most intriguing of all, we come to the section of the piece featuring the line meaning “through the evening prayer rising into Shabbat” (2:32–2:45). It is here that the text invokes the Zoharic ideal of the prayers of the Jewish people ascending to the heavens in full and unified purity and devotion. Through this prayer, the divine act of love between Hashem and the Shechinah leading to universal redemption is finally made possible. Why, though, is this line about prayer *rising* set to a *descending* rather than an ascending melodic line (2:32–2:41)? The “answer” arrives immediately following the singing of the line of text itself in the form of an ascending, *wordless* melody that climbs an octave up the scale, step by step, as if rising up the ladder of holiness for God to hear (2:42–2:45).

The poignancy of the symbolism in this passage is suggested by the following comments of Pinson. “In the Kabbalah,” he writes, “it is explained that words, though they are designed to reveal, are actually a concealment. . . . When we find ourselves with a pure thought, a deeply felt emotion, and no words which will communicate it without dilution of the original feeling, we sing. A wordless melody from the soul, with the notes becoming a channel from the essence of my soul, to the essence of yours. . . . Music has the unique ability to be apprehended by one’s rational mind yet at the same time, communicate something which is above logic and human understanding” (Pinson 2000:11–12).

guided listening quick summary

“Roza DeShabbos,” Ruth Wieder Magan (CD ex. #3-32)

As you listen, focus especially on those portions of the selection featuring the key examples of musical word painting outlined below.

KEY EXAMPLE 1

0:40–0:53

- Literal meaning of text line: “. . . as being one within One.”
- Meaning in context: Shechinah is encompassed in supreme Oneness of God through their divine union.
- Musical word painting: Dramatic decrease in volume (decrescendo) as voice swoops upward in pitch on “within One” (0:43–0:45). On the long-held high note at the top of the ascent, sound

essentially disappears into silence (0:45–0:48), then returns to moderate dynamic level as melody descends (0:48–0:53). Elegant heavenward flight–earthward return symbolism in both the melodic contour and the use of dynamics.

KEY EXAMPLE 2

1:00–1:25

- Literal meaning of text line: “God is One and His Name is One.” (“Adonai Echad oo-sh’mo Echad.”)
- Meaning in context: This pronouncement represents the foundational premise of Jewish faith.
- Musical word painting: From 1:03–1:14, Wieder Magan crescendos dramatically on the word “Echad” (“One,” as in the One true God) then holds the note out very loud and long (seven seconds). This seemingly symbolizes “arrival” of God as a manifest presence in the scenario. This dramatic “heavenward flight” is followed by “earthward return” in second half of phrase (1:15–1:25), with its descending melody and lower dynamic level.

KEY EXAMPLE 3

2:21–2:31

- Literal meaning of text line: “. . . the mystery of One resting in her.”
- Meaning in context: Evocation of divine union of Hashem and the Shechinah.
- Musical word painting: Calming descent into the low register of Wieder Magan’s voice at this decisive moment of universal redemption; a lover’s caress in sound, so to speak.

KEY EXAMPLE 4

2:32–2:45

- Literal meaning of text line: “. . . through the evening prayer rising into Shabbat.”
- Meaning in context: It is the heavenward ascent of the prayers of Jewish people on Shabbat that inspires the redemptive, divine union of Hashem and the Shechinah.
- Musical word painting: Linking of the *descending* melody to which this text is set (2:32–2:41) with a message concerning the profound importance of prayer *ascending* may seem paradoxical at first. The rising, wordless melody that immediately follows, however (2:42–2:45), reflects this message with more direct symbolism, while also showing how melody itself is more spiritually powerful even than the words of prayer.

Ruth Wieder Magan: Dusting off the surfaces of tradition

There can be little doubt that Ruth Wieder Magan’s performance of “Roza DeShabbos” is not just a powerful musical statement, but also a powerful expression of the artist’s Jewish faith. The question of whether or not such a performance is *appropriate* as an expression of Jewish faith, however, is a subject of debate and controversy in some sectors of Jewish society.

The source of controversy stems from differing attitudes regarding gender. In some Chasidic and ultra-Orthodox forms of Judaism, the principle of **kol isha** (“the voice of a woman”) dictates that women should not sing prayers in the presence of men. The rationale for this is that a woman’s voice has the potential to distract men from their all-important prayers. Since religious practice prescribes that prayer is principally the duty of men (although women most certainly pray as well), this is a genuinely serious concern.

Furthermore, for a woman to sing publicly in the presence of men is to defy fundamental notions of “women’s modesty” that are highly prized in orthodox forms of Judaism. The model Jewish woman, in this orthodox vision, is one who strives to approach in her own life the divine

kol isha
(kohl ee-SHAH)

In contrast to Chassidic women, Chassidic men may appear as anything but modest in their ritual expressions of faith through singing. As Koskoff explains, in men's singing the musical pursuit of *deveikut*—that is, of a Kabbalah-inspired ideal of communion with the divine—may involve “loud clapping, shouting, thumping, . . . speeding up, swaying, and, at times, dancing. Arms begin to flail, drinking becomes more obvious. . . . After many repetitions, many sips of vodka, and wilder and wilder bodily gestures, swooning or unconsciousness may take place. . . . These behaviors are inevitably interpreted as overstimulation in the face of the divine, and those who achieve unconsciousness are treated with special deference” (Koskoff 2001:110–11).

ideal of the Shechinah—the epitome of female modesty, whose pure form of neutrality is essential to all God's creations. The woman's role in the redemption of the world is to embody this modesty, humility, and neutrality in devotion to God.

The *kol isha* concept transfers to the *sight* of a woman as well. Therefore, in Chassidic and other Orthodox synagogues, the women are separated from the men, congregating in the “women's gallery,” which is set off by a screen, a sheet, or often nowadays, heavily tinted but transparent black plastic panels (Koskoff 2001:7). From the perspective of a person with modern, Western sensibilities, *kol isha* may seem backward and repressive, but most Chassidic women regard it as neither. As ethnomusicologist Ellen Koskoff explains, they regard symbols of *kol isha* such as the plastic panels as necessary for the protection of their modesty. If Jewish women are to pursue the ideal of the Shechinah, then their own modesty must be secured at all costs. And from such a vantage point, lacking access to certain highly prized values of the modern West, such as “freedom of self-expression” or “equal opportunity,” is seen as a small price to pay for ensuring the realization of one's divine purpose on earth.

Chassidic women, then, “must be self-conscious and conscious of others, always aware of their social and religious context,” according to Koskoff (2001:139). Although men can “express their spiritual feelings without . . . limitation, even within a mixed-gender, public context” (see “Insights and Perspectives” box above), women “can sing only for and among each other” (Koskoff 2001:139). Given these constraints, the following response to Ruth Wieder Magan's recording of “Roza DeShabbos” by a Chassidic rabbi (Rabbi Schneur Oirechman of Tallahassee, Florida) is not surprising: “I don't like this, women coming and trying to sing the prayers, trying to change the role of women prescribed in the Torah. The role of the Jewish woman is to be modest, and her role in the world is very important” (Oirechman, personal correspondence with the author, 2002).

Jewish women like Wieder Magan have their own views on their “role in the world,” however. A serious student of Kabbalah and other Jewish sacred traditions, she does not consider her musical work to be in any way defiant or blasphemous. On the contrary, she describes it as a *return* to tradition.

“What my work has been about,” she explains, “is going to my tradition and freeing its captive female voice, to draw that voice out through careful study of the texts and songs and reclaim it, drawing it into myself. . . . In both the Talmud and the *Zohar*, I believe there is a definite feminine voice. Both are non-linear texts: their movement circles and spirals in and out of many worlds and many, many layers of interpretation. . . . I believe that this spiraling movement is definitely feminine in nature. It is the center of the creative power behind the great Jewish texts and liturgy” (Wieder Magan 2000:272).

Schneur Oirechman
(Sh'noor OY-rekhe-
min [Yiddish
pronunciation])

Kabbalah à la Madonna

If Ruth Wieder Magan is a controversial figure in the world of Kabbalah, then what is one to make of pop superstar Madonna?

The wisdom and teachings of Kabbalah have influenced many of the great figures in Western intellectual and cultural history, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Isaac Newton, William Shakespeare, and Sigmund Freud, for example, were all familiar with Kabbalah to some degree, and it is reasonable to suggest (as some have) that Kabbalistic influences are present in their work.

In more recent years, the teachings of Kabbalah have been embraced by “New Age” spiritual seekers. People and groups from many walks of life now claim to be devotees of Kabbalah. The most famous of these neo-Kabbalists is probably Madonna, who became involved with the study of Jewish mysticism in the mid-1990s. In a 2003 *USA Today* online article, she describes the impact of Kabbalah on her life:

“Kabbalah helped me understand that there is a bigger picture and that being well-intentioned is great, but if you don’t live your life according to the laws of the universe, you bring chaos into your life. . . . I was raised to believe that the privilege of being American means you can be whatever you want. But the question is, to what end? What’s the point of reaching the top? I started that search when I was pregnant with my daughter, because I suddenly realized I was going to be responsible for shaping another person’s life. Studying [Kabbalah] has given me clarity and affected my life in every way” (Madonna, quoted in Gundersen 2003).

The organization with which Madonna’s Kabbalistic journey has been associated is the Kabbalah Centre, which states outright that it is *not* a Jewish organization (much like many modern yoga training centers in the West have no direct connection to the traditions of Hinduism from which yoga derives). Madonna, like anyone, is and should be free to pursue the spiritual path of her choice. It is important to realize, however, that the school of Kabbalistic thought with which she is identified is essentially separate from Jewish traditions of Kabbalah *per se* (Judah Cohen, personal correspondence with the author, 2005).

Madonna speaking at a Kabbalah Centre event in Israel.



“As a woman,” Wieder Magan continues, “I must revolutionize this masculine form in order to sing it. Being a woman gives me a big advantage. It makes it easier for me to dust off the surfaces of the tradition, peel back its layers. I can go in and sense the core of the music, its primary source” (Magan 2000:272–73).

Zohar Remix

Ruth Wieder Magan’s “Roza DeShabbos” is not the only relatively recent musical production to take Pinchas Pinchik’s historic 1928 “Roso De Shabbos” recording as source and inspiration. The imprint of Pinchik’s “Roso” is present in an entirely different way in “Ehad” (an alternate spelling of *Echad*), by the innovative group Zöhar (**CD ex. #3-33**).

Our exploration of Zöhar’s “Ehad” takes us to London, England. Zöhar is the brainchild of two self-described “young London Jewish lads,” Erran Baron Cohen and Andrew Kremer, who,



Erran Baron Cohen of Zöhar. He also composed the musical score for the film *Borat*, starring his brother Sacha Baron Cohen.

after meeting in 1997, collaborated in developing a rather unique style of techno-Judaic fusion music. Upon first getting to know each other, Baron Cohen and Kremer discovered that they shared a dual passion for underground urban club music (techno, electronica, rap, hip-hop, acid jazz), on the one hand, and traditional Jewish and Arab music, on the other (see “Insights and Perspectives” box on p. 349 regarding techno and electronica). It was their common desire to unite these seemingly disparate musical worlds in the creation of a new medium of musical expression that led to the formation of Zöhar.

While Kremer’s interest in traditional Jewish music did not really come to fruition until he was already a young man and a working musician on the London dance club scene, Baron Cohen’s love of the music developed much earlier. He grew up in a Jewish household. From childhood, he took great joy in listening to classic recordings from his parents’ record collection that featured the great Jewish cantors. Pinchik’s “Rosó De Shabbos” was likely one of the records that he grew up listening to. But Baron Cohen’s musical tastes were eclectic. Jewish music was by no means his only passion. He found himself equally enamored of the contemporary sounds of techno and other electronic and electro-acoustic dance music styles of the London underground scene. He became a part of that scene during the late 1980s and 1990s, but this new musical life did not temper his enthusiasm for the Jewish music of his youth.

One night at a London area club, Baron Cohen heard something that struck him as quite remarkable: a techno dance mix in which the electronically transformed and manipulated, digitally sampled voice of a famous Israeli singer, Ofra Haza, was featured prominently. Baron Cohen recognized Haza’s

voice immediately, and in that same instant emerged his concept for the techno-Judaic fusion approach that would crystallize with Zöhar. With the aid of sophisticated digital sampling technology and contributions of like-minded musical colleagues such as Kremer, Zöhar drummer Neil Conti, and percussionist Simone Haggiag, Baron Cohen was able to fashion all kinds of intriguing “collaborations” with great singers, living and otherwise.

Zöhar’s music draws upon many different sources, from techno, electronica, jazz, and funk to Middle Eastern dance music (see Chapter 12) and klezmer. But the key element of the group’s unique fusion approach is their merging of techno grooves and textures with digitally sampled and manipulated vocal tracks culled from historic recordings. Often these “source recordings” are of renowned Jewish cantors like Pinchas Pinchik, who is “featured”—in digitally sampled form—on “Ehad,” the opening track of the group’s 2001 album, *onethreeseven*. All of the digital samples of Pinchik’s voice heard in “Ehad” are derived from his 1928 recording of “Rosó De Shabbos.”

The Zohar in Zöhar’s “Ehad”

While the range of musical influences and sources that come to bear in “Ehad” may be readily discerned from the biographies of the music’s creators and the sound of the music itself, the extent to which an *actual* Zoharic underpinning may (or may not) inform the music’s plan and design is rather more difficult to determine. Nothing in the CD booklet accompanying *onethreeseven* or other available literature on Zöhar indicates that Baron Cohen or Kremer are serious students of the Zohar or other aspects of Kabbalah; on the other hand, nothing indicates specifically that they are not. In either case, a Kabbalistic orientation of some kind is evident in the band’s

Techno and Electronica

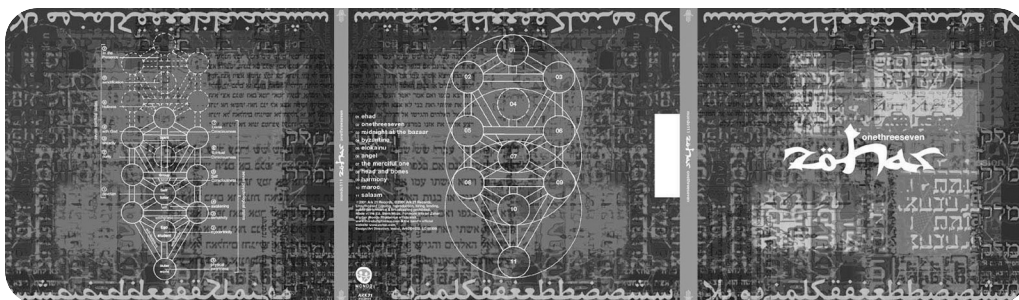
Techno has become a widely used and difficult-to-pinpoint term applied to a great range of contemporary electronic dance music. The term originated with a style that came out of the inner city of Detroit in the 1980s, in which DJs (disc jockeys) would mix together sparse, funky electronic grooves with futuristic, “sci-fi” sounds. The first big techno hit was “Big Fun,” by Inner City (a.k.a. DJ Kevin Saunderson), released in 1989. The infatuation of DJs and club musicians of the London underground scene with Detroit techno led to the establishment of a large British techno scene beginning around 1989. From Britain, the movement spread throughout Europe, Asia, and, ultimately, back to North America, where techno entered the “mainstream” of popular music culture in the 1990s (as opposed to its limited Detroit/inner-city circulation in the ‘80s) (see Strauss 2001).

Nowadays, the term *techno* is used almost interchangeably with *electronica* as a kind of generic tag for a wide range of electronic dance music genres and subgenres: technofunk, ambient, house, acid house, jungle, trip-hop, techno itself (the “original” Detroit and London sounds), and so on. The dividing line between techno, rap, and hip-hop also has become extremely blurry. Today, DJs, musicians, club-going dancers, and others mix and match musics of all imaginable kinds together, taking advantage of the powerful boundary-blurring potential of modern electronic technologies to exploit both modern sounds *and* musical sounds that have been drawn into the mix from the past.

name and in the *onethreeseven* CD cover art (see below). The cover includes an illustration of the “cosmic tree” of the Sefirot; a collage featuring passages of Jewish sacred scripture; and the title “onethreeseven” itself, a reference to the numerical equivalent (137) of the word “Kabbalah” in the gematria system of Kabbalistic numerology.

These clues, together with what I, at least, hear in the music of “Ehad,” have led to the essentially Zoharic interpretation of the piece that follows in our final Guided Listening Experience. The basic premise of the interpretation is that “Ehad,” like the Pinchik recording that is embedded within its eclectic mixture of electro-acoustic timbres and textures, is a Zoharic tone-poem in its own right. Here, however, the musical symbolism mainly emerges through sections with contrasting textures rather than through melodic symbolism, word painting, or other devices we have encountered thus far. It is principally the different combinations of instruments, “voices,” sounds, timbres, and rhythms of “Ehad” that tell its Zohar-derived story.

As for the story itself, the interpretation advanced here is that “Ehad” picks up where Roza D’Shabbos left off in the Zohar’s tale of universal redemption. It begins in the divine afterglow



Cover of Zohar’s CD *onethreeseven*.

of the reunification of Hashem and the Shechinah, then continues with the long-awaited and triumphant arrival of Hashem in His new paradise on earth, where He may finally rule as King of Kings in a redeemed and reunited universe. The rest of the story told in the music chronicles a series of heavenward flights and earthward returns, with the heavily processed, digitally sampled voice of Pinchik in the role of the now-manifest Hashem, and the “voice” of a solo synthesizer (played by Baron Cohen) taking the part of a soul striving for, and ultimately achieving, *deveikut*, or communion with the Divine.

guided listening experience



“Ehad,” Zöhar

- CD Track #3-33
- Featured performer(s)/group: Zöhar, with Erran Baron Cohen (piano, synthesizers), Andrew Kremer (bass), Neil Conti (drums), Simone Haggiag (percussion)
- Format: Complete track
- Source recording: *onethreeseven*, by Zöhar (Mondorhythmica/Ark 21 Records 186 850 032 2)

The first and key vocal utterance of “Ehad” occurs at 0:09, where Pinchas Pinchik’s digitally sampled voice is heard rising up in pitch and diminishing in volume to near-nothingness against a serene background of acoustic piano and bass. The voice glides upward into the heavens on the word “Echad” (“Ehad”), or “One,” on this “Echad glide.” A heavenly, ethereal musical atmosphere befitting the afterglow of Hashem’s divine reunification with the Shechinah is created in this gentle opening.

Then, with dramatic suddenness, the jarring boom of an electronic drum “bomb” disturbs the celestial serenity at about 0:14. This bomb, together with a second appearance of the sampled Echad glide that occurs simultaneously with it, serves to announce Hashem’s manifest arrival in His redeemed, earthly world. A funky rhythmic groove featuring drumset, a *darabukkah* (goblet-shaped, Middle Eastern drum—see also Chapter 12), and an increasingly active bass part contribute to the new musical texture, all reinforcing the sense that we have been musically transported to a new, earthbound setting.

Meanwhile, the piano part continues as before, its calm, elevated demeanor suggesting the merging of heavenly and earthly worlds in the newly reunited cosmic order. By the time the “voice of Hashem” reenters at 0:31, now singing a series of melodic phrases built from skillfully merged, digitally sampled snippets from Pinchik’s original “Roso,” divine voice and earthly groove are totally in sync. Hashem has taken charge and the music is flowing.

The level of integration grows even deeper beginning at 0:47, where the Echad glide returns and is repeated several times in succession. It becomes the “hook” for the piece overall from here on out, the musical and textual centerpoint around which the composition as a whole builds. Literally and figuratively, the spirit of interaction becomes decidedly celebratory as Hashem jams with the band and they with Him. From this point onward, the piece, much like the Pinchik version of “Roso” that inspired it, unfolds as a series of “soaring flights heavenward” and “chastened returns earthward,” with the Echad glide as the central pivot.

At 1:19, both the voice and the percussive groove suddenly cut out, leaving in their wake just the serene, piano-bass musical environment of the opening. This time, though, when the Echad glide returns over the piano and bass at 1:31, Hashem, rather than being brought down to earth as before, instead ascends heavenward on the wings of a surprising, celestial-sounding, modulating synthesizer chord at 1:33. Hashem then disappears into the infinite nothingness of the heavens.

Following this moment of heavenward flight, the scene shifts abruptly back to the earthly realm, where the jam session continues with renewed vigor at 1:37. Eight measures of straight-up, hard-driving rhythmic groove set the stage for a synthesizer solo beginning at 1:53. The timbre of the synthesizer and the plaintive, yearning quality of its melody suggest a voice of prayer. And it is more specifically a *Jewish* voice of prayer, as is symbolized in the music's distinctively Jewish/Middle Eastern modal character here.

Presumably pleased by what He hears rising up from below, Hashem returns earthward with His signature Echad glide to engage in a call-and-response dialogue with this synthesized voice of prayer (2:25–2:40). But at 2:41, the divine voice begins to become unhinged from the rhythmic underpinning. With each successive Echad glide, voice and rhythmic groove become progressively more disengaged. Then, at 2:47, the prayerful voice of the synthesizer likewise takes leave of the music's rhythmic foundation. A suspension of the groove, the disappearance of all but the reverberating echo of the voice of Hashem, and the transformation of the synthesizer's timbre into that of a chorus of angels from 2:57–3:12 collectively serve to transport us heavenward once again, where the righteous soul embodied in the synthesizer's "voice" has apparently joined together with Hashem in the heavenly realm; in other words, it has achieved *deveikut*, oneness with the Divine.

At 3:13, we are again plummeted back to earth, where music of pure groove becomes the signature of an unprecedented spirit of celebration. The intensity builds, summoning Hashem's earthward return. He arrives at 4:49 for a final, triumphant reprise of the Echad glide hook, following which the piece concludes with the Holy One disappearing into the stratosphere one last time, again accompanied by the "heavenly angel" tones of the synthesizer.

guided listening quick summary

"Ehad," by Zöhar (CD ex. #3-33)

INTRODUCTION

0:00–0:13

- Serene atmosphere created by acoustic piano and bass at beginning.
- First Echad glide (digitally sampled voice of Pinchik) heard at 0:09, ascending in pitch as it diminishes in volume to near-silence.
- Musical atmosphere evokes Hashem-Shechinah union afterglow.

EARTHWARD DESCENT I

0:14–1:18

- Electronic drum bomb at 0:14 and simultaneous Echad glide, followed immediately by drumset/darabbukah/bass funk groove, announce Hashem's manifest arrival in the earthly world.
- Serene piano part continues.
- Hashem (Pinchik's digitally sampled voice) gets fully in sync with the band from 0:31 on.
- Multiple repetitions of Echad glide, which becomes the "hook" of the song (0:47).

HEAVENWARD ASCENT I

1:19–1:36

- Voice and rhythmic groove cut out, leaving just the "ethereal" texture of acoustic piano and bass heard at the start.
- Return of Hashem in the form of the Echad glide at 1:31, but this time He soars heavenward on wings of a celestial synthesizer chord (1:33) rather than remaining earthbound.

SHIFT BACK TO EARTHLY REALM (EARTHWARD DESCENT II)

1:37–2:40

- Abrupt shift back to earth with hard-driving groove set up at 1:37.
- Plaintive synthesizer solo beginning at 1:53 evokes a Jewish voice of prayer.
- Hashem returns to earth near end of section to rejoin the band and engage in call-and-response dialogue with synthesizer (2:25–2:40).

HEAVENWARD ASCENT II

2:41–3:12

- First Hashem (2:41), then synthesizer (2:47) disengage from underpinning of rhythmic groove.
- Heavenward flight for Hashem and synthesizer together at 2:57–3:12; rhythmic groove temporarily suspended; reverberating echo of Hashem voice and conversion of synthesizer tone into “chorus of angels” symbolize flight.

EARTHWARD DESCENT III AND HEAVENWARD ASCENT III

3:13–end

- Pure groove section established (following drum lead-in at 3:11); unprecedented spirit of celebration.
- Building intensity as Hashem is summoned for one final chorus.
- Hashem returns for His “out-chorus” with the band at 4:49, then glides heavenward one last time on the wings of the angelic synthesizer to end the piece.

Summary

Musically, historically, culturally, and geographically, our journey through musical worlds emanating from the Zohar has taken us a great distance: from the Jacob’s Ladder-like melodic symbolism of Isaac Kataev’s “V’amazirim” (Bukhara), to the elaborate word painting of Ruth Wieder Magan’s “Roza DeShabbos” (Israel), to the varied and evocative electro-acoustic tapestries of Zöhar’s “Ehad” (England).

Despite their wide and eclectic musicultural range, all of these different examples of “Jewish music” were shown to have a common point of departure in their shared reliance on the Zohar and its fundamental message of hope for a future age of universal redemption. We saw this message of hope enduring and transforming not just in the music explored, but also through many episodes and eras of Jewish history. It projects forward and backward in time and space from the Zohar itself: backward to the divine revelations believed by Kabbalists to have been experienced by Shimon Bar Yochai, to the golden age of the Israelite kingdoms of Biblical times, and to the very creation of the universe as described in the Torah; forward from Shimon Bar Yochai to Moses de León, Isaac Luria, the Chassidic traditions of Kabbalah in Eastern Europe and then New York, and the modernist (and post-modernist) movements of Jewish reform that underscore the musical, cultural, and religious foundations of musical artists like Ruth Wieder Magan and Zöhar.

Ascent and descent, going out and coming back, travel between worldly and heavenly realms, and, most important of all, the prospect of hope—these are the pervasive themes that unify the diverse Zoharic musical journeys we explored in this chapter. Jewish music, Jewish *musics*, are alive and well in our contemporary world. Like music traditions the world over, from Mali to Mumbai and Bali to Boston, they endure and find vitality and sustenance in the very processes of their own transformation.

Key Terms

Zohar	rabbis	Roza D'Shabbos (passage of Zohar)
Kabbalah	Aramaic	Hashem
deveikut	Chassidism	Ain Sof
Torah	Yiddish	Ten Sefirot
Hebrew Bible	Reform Judaism	Malchut
Jewish diaspora	Holocaust	Shechinah
Hebrew (language)	word painting	cantor
Rabbinic Judaism	gematria	kol isha
synagogue		

Study Questions

- What is the meaning of deveikut?
- What is Kabbalah?
- How did Jews retain their identity as a people through many centuries of diasporic existence?
- Why is it more appropriate to speak of Jewish *musics* than of Jewish music?
- Can any existing traditions of Jewish music be traced back to the musical culture of the ancient Israelites in Biblical times?
- What kind of a text is the Zohar and what are the theories regarding its origin? In what ways were Shimon Bar Yochai, Moses de León, Isaac Luria, and the Chassidic movement significant to the Zohar's history?
- Who are Ain Sof, Hashem, Adonai, the Shechinah? What are the Ten Sefirot?
- How does Isaac Kataev's performance of "V'amazirim" evoke heavenward ascent and earthward return through its melodic contour?
- What is word painting, and how does Ruth Wieder Magan use this important technique of musical symbolism to evoke the Zoharic text of "Roza DeShabbos"?
- Why is a wordless melody considered more spiritually powerful than a melody with words in Kabbalistic prayer?
- Who was Pinchas Pinchik and what is his significance relative to this chapter?
- Why is Ruth Wieder Magan's recording of "Roza DeShabbos" deemed controversial in some sectors of Jewish society?
- What is kol isha?
- What types of musical symbolism does the group Zöhar use in "Ehad"? What is especially interesting and innovative about their use of digital sampling technology in that piece?

Discussion Questions

- Early in this chapter, historian Raymond Scheindlin was quoted as saying that "the Jewish people and the Jewish religion are not at all the same thing, certainly not in modern times" (Scheindlin 1998:xii). What implications does this statement have for understanding Jewish culture and Judaism, and Jewish musics? By extension, what questions and issues does it raise in relation to the identities, cultures, and musics of peoples who practice other religious faiths: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism?

- For different reasons, Ruth Wieder Magan’s “Roza DeShabbos” and Zöhar’s “Ehad” are unconventional, even radical, examples of “Jewish music.” What are the advantages and disadvantages of exploring these examples in an introductory chapter such as this one?

Applying What You Have Learned

- Word painting is one of the most common symbolic devices used in music throughout the world. Listen to a variety of songs in different styles from your personal music collection. Focus on the words and how they are set to the music. Identify one or more examples of word painting in each song you listen to. Describe how the words are brought to life and “painted” through symbolic uses of melodic direction, rhythmic presentation, dynamics, or other musical elements.

Resources for Further Study

Visit the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/bakan1 for learning aids, study help, and additional resources that supplement the content of this chapter.

chapter fourteen glossary

- Ain Sof** [Ayn-SOAF]: (Ch. 14) The “God of Nothingness,” or “Invisible God,” in Kabbalah. Unknowable, unfathomable aspect of the supreme deity. See also *Ten Sefirot*, *Hashem*.
- Aramaic**: (Ch. 14) Original language in which the *Zohar* was written.
- cantor**: (Ch. 14) The solo singer and leader of congregational chanting in Jewish religious services.
- Chassidism** [KHA-sid-is-um]: (Ch. 14) Form of *Kabbalah*-inspired Judaism that arose in Central and Eastern Europe during the 18th century. Stressed populist appeal, joy in worship, and ecstatic experience over more learned, rationalist religious approaches. Took inspiration from the Baal Shem Tov. Remains a vital movement in Judaism today.
- deveikut** [d’vay-KOOT]: (Ch. 14) “To be one with the Divine”; a key concept of *Kabbalah*.
- gematria** [ge-MA-tree-yah]: (Ch. 14) Mystical numerology tradition in *Kabbalah*.
- Hashem** [Hah-SHEM]: (Ch. 14) Literally means “The Name”; refers to God, as conceived of in Judaism.
- Hebrew**: (Ch. 14) The ancient Jewish language of the *Torah* and other scriptural writings; modern Hebrew is the national language of Israel.
- Hebrew Bible**: (Ch. 14) The foundational scriptures of Judaism, consisting of the *Torah*, the books of the Prophets, and the Hagiographa (or Sacred Writings). (Identified in Christianity as the Old Testament of the Christian Bible.)
- Holocaust**: (Ch. 14) The genocidal slaughter of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis in Europe during World War II.
- Jewish diaspora**: (Ch. 14) The global dispersion of the Jewish people from their ancestral homeland (in modern-day Israel), with a history dating back millennia.
- Kabbalah** [Kah-bah-LAH]: (Ch. 14) The Jewish mystical tradition, including its canonical works like the *Zohar*.
- kol isha** [kohl ee-SHAH]: (Ch. 14) Literally means “the voice of a woman.” Refers to the belief in some domains of Jewish society that women should not sing prayers in the presence of men.
- Malchut** [Mall-KHOOT]: (Ch. 14) The lowest of the *Ten Sefirot* in the *Zohar*, wherein the *Shechinah* is thought to reside.
- Rabbinic Judaism**: (Ch. 14) The principal tradition(s) of Jewish religious practice from Roman times to the present, focusing on study of the *Torah* and related texts and on congregational worship in *synagogues* led by *rabbis*.
- rabbis**: (Ch. 14) Specialists in Jewish religious traditions and law who serve as the leaders of *synagogue* congregations; historically, it was rabbis who also created the canonical texts of Biblical interpretation, such as the Mishnah and the Talmud.
- Reform Judaism**: (Ch. 14) An important movement in Judaism that first developed in Germany in the 19th century; premised on the notion that the conventional rituals and laws of Judaism need to be adjusted and transformed in accordance with changing (modern) times and social conditions.
- Roza D’Shabbos** [RAW-za d’SHAH-bus]: (Ch. 14) Passage from the *Zohar* that forecasts a coming age of universal redemption under the divine rule of *Hashem*. Basis of several musical works explored in this chapter.
- Shechinah** [Sh’khee-NAH]: (Ch. 14) In the *Zohar* and other Kabbalistic works, the “female,” receiving aspect of *Hashem*, whose domain is *Malchut*, the lowest of the *Ten Sefirot*. The Shechinah’s reunification with Hashem is central to the Zoharic passage *Roza D’Shabbos*.
- synagogue**: (Ch. 14) Jewish house of worship.
- Ten Sefirot**: (Ch. 14) In the *Zohar*, the 10 rays of divine radiance through which *Ain Sof* becomes knowable as the God of the Creation, the *Torah*, and the earthly and heavenly realms.
- Torah** [Toe-RAH (Hebrew), TOE-rah (English)]: (Ch. 14) The foundational sacred scripture of the Jewish religion; heart of the *Hebrew Bible*.
- word painting**: (Ch. 14) A type of musical symbolism in which the text set to music is evoked in the sound and design of the music itself (e.g., through melodic direction, dynamics, textural contrasts).
- Yiddish**: (Ch. 14) A language historically spoken by Jews of Central/Eastern Europe (and still spoken today) that combines German with elements of Hebrew, Russian, Polish, and other languages.
- Zohar** [ZOE-har]: (Ch. 14) Canonical text of *Kabbalah*; takes the form of a sprawling compendium of mystical commentaries on the *Hebrew Bible* and other sacred texts.

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chapter fourteen credits

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